

Book review:

Friedman, Mordechai Akiva, *A Dictionary of Medieval Judeo-Arabic: In the India Book Letters from the Geniza and in Other Texts*. Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem, 2016. xx, 1017 pp. isbn 978 9 65235 194 4.

Reliable dictionaries are essential for researching linguistic topics related to Hebrew and Arabic. The study of subjects relating to the contemporary use of these languages is facilitated by the accessibility of the necessary lexical tools. But things get more complicated when it comes to dealing with texts written in medieval or early modern forms of Hebrew and Arabic, or different dialects or linguistic varieties. In particular, there is still a serious lack of dictionaries that enable research into Arabic and Hebrew terms which are specific to medieval Judaeo-Arabic (Arabic texts written in Hebrew script). Yet the study of Judaeo-Arabic texts is not only important for exploring Jewish history and literature in the period from the medieval period onwards, but it also constitutes an essential means of gaining an understanding of Middle Eastern history and society and of Muslim and Christian communities. An accurate and correct reading of such critical texts is also essential for precise linguistic analyses, and it is particularly important to identify rare post-classical Arabic terms no longer used in the modern language and thus not found in classical and modern Arabic dictionaries. Following Diem and Radenburg (*A Dictionary of the Arabic Material of S.D. Goitein's A Mediterranean Society* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994)) and Blau (*A Dictionary of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic Texts* (Jerusalem: Acad. of the Hebrew Language, 2006)), the Judaeo-Arabic dictionary under review written by Modechai Akiva Friedman fulfils this need.

The dictionary begins with fourteen pages of introduction, which provide general information about Judaeo-Arabic, outline the preparatory work that has been done on the dictionary and the methodology used for arranging the entries, and include observations on Arabic orthography and a description of the texts used to compile the dictionary. The materials on which Friedman depends are mostly dated to the period between the 11th and 13th centuries. The idea of composing the dictionary came from Friedman's long-term work on completing and publishing the famous unfinished *India Book* by Shelomo Dov Goitein (Leiden: Brill, 2008). The initial

corpus that Friedman used to extract the entries of the dictionary includes about five hundred texts, mainly from the *India Book* series, in addition to other sources. The dictionary also includes traditional Judaeo-Arabic literature, including works by Moses Maimonides and his son Abraham Maimonides.

The dictionary has one appendix and a number of indices. The former provides short, but important, linguistic observations about Judaeo-Arabic, including phonology, morphology, orthography and style. A list of abbreviations, a bibliography, an index of the entries with roots and an index of classmarks are attached to the dictionary.

The entries are mostly supported by examples of extended phrases extracted from the Judaeo-Arabic sources, followed by their Hebrew translation. Friedman stresses that he did not rely solely on the edited Judaeo-Arabic texts that have been published so far, but rather that he preferred to inspect the original manuscripts, especially in texts from the Cairo Genizah. This painstaking re-checking of sources ensures that the dictionary serves as a valuable resource for scholars interested in the study of lexicology of Arabic as written by Jews during the medieval period.

Entries are generally arranged by their Arabic roots and divided into sub-entries, which contain further related terms and lexemes derived from the main entry with extended examples from different resources. Friedman also refers to other dictionaries when he includes terms that are already mentioned in previously published glossaries.

One important feature of the dictionary is Friedman's copying of the Judaeo-Arabic examples as they appeared in the source texts. For example, he renders the original vocalisation and does not impose normative grammar. This method is beneficial and practical for scholars studying linguistic topics related to the diachronic development of Arabic in general and the Middle Arabic linguistic variety in particular, including the deviations from standard Arabic and the variations of registers and the dialectology of Arabic spoken or written by Jews during the Medieval period. Examples of these topics are well reflected in the examples supporting the entries of the dictionary. Some are written in a high literary style, others are by less educated people in a more mixed Arabic style. They therefore constitute a vibrant and wide-ranging

linguistic corpus, which can be useful for further linguistic investigations, particularly in lexical and dialectal studies. The examples are also useful for research on Hebrew-Arabic code-switching and borrowing. For instance, the dictionary entries detail many borrowed Hebrew terms, such as the lemma *m-k-s* which is borrowed from the Hebrew lexical item *meḳes* (customs) as a verb and as a noun (see p. 474), and the Hebrew lemma *m-z-l* (p. 470).

Friedman's dictionary takes into consideration both colloquial and standard classical registers extracted from various Judaeo-Arabic resources, which distinguishes his work from Blau's eminent dictionary which focuses mostly on high register terms (Blau, 2006, pp. 12–13).

Since the dictionary is written mainly to aid the reader of Judaeo-Arabic texts, one expects entries to be arranged according to the Arabic alphabetic order. The dictionary, however, follows the Hebrew alphabet. This is a possible source of confusion for the user who has not first read Friedman's introduction, particularly because phonemes which are spelled with the same letter in Hebrew script, such as *Jīm* and *Ghayn* or *Kāf* and *Khā'*, appear next to each other, while they are arranged in very different order in the Arabic alphabet.

Friedman's dictionary of Medieval Judaeo-Arabic addresses researchers whose interests lie not only in the study of Judaeo-Arabic but also in general linguistic topics, including Arabic studies from historical, lexicological and sociolinguistic perspectives. The dictionary provides a robust corpus for research on Middle Arabic lexicology, supported by various examples from unique textual material, and constitutes an excellent contribution to the study of different Arabic linguistic varieties in the mediaeval era.

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